

BOARD CHAIRMAN
Andrew De Kraker
BOARD VICE CHAIRMAN
Vernon J. Ehlers
COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Finance:
John K. Boerema

Personnel:
Clarence W. Fuller, Jr.

Legislative:
Thomas H. Lamoreaux

Buildings:
Frederick W. Wahlfield

MEMBERS
Robert L. Broersma
Richard D. Bulh
Donald L. Davis
Gerald L. DeRuiter
Fred J. Eardley
Duane E. Ensing
Daniel B. Hess
Friley T. Johnson
Aggie Kempker
Carol Landheer
Joseph A. Mazurkiewicz
Jackson J. Root
Robert W. Schellenberg
Berton Sevensma
Arnold A. Wittenbach

Clerk of the Board:
Jack Bronkema

APPOINTED
ADMINISTRATORS

Controller:
Richard J. Platte

Deputy Controller:
Dale H. Sommers



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

June 7, 1978

300 Monroe Avenue, N.W.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
administrative office (616) 774-3512

Mr. Roger Conner
Executive Director
West Michigan Environmental
Action Council
1324 Lake Drive S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

REFERENCE: Kent County Refuse Disposal System

Dear Roger:

Thank you for your letter of May 26. You may be assured that I share your concern about proper operation of the Department of Public Works Plainfield Township Landfill, and thus I would like to respond to each point in your letter.

1. Hydrogeologic Investigation and Piezometric Surface Determination

As your letter indicates, we are giving top priority to this matter, and have submitted all the requested information to the Department of Natural Resources. In addition, two of their geologists have visited the site and assisted in the placement of monitoring wells. We are currently awaiting the Department of Natural Resources' decision.

I should clarify a misunderstanding. At no time has refuse been placed at a level which would violate the seven feet of isolation between cell bottoms and the water table. There was only one cell where the water level was too close to the cell bottom, and Bob Scott installed an underdrain and then raised the bottom of the cell six to nine feet above previous plans in order to insure the proper isolation distance. This was communicated to the Department of Natural Resources in a letter dated October 11, 1977. Plans detailing these changes should be submitted to the Department of Natural Resources within a week.

2. Discharge From the Leachate Holding Lagoon

Initially, we discharged water from the leachate lagoon when it contained only runoff water, i.e. before any leachate

Mr. Roger Conner
Page Two
June 7, 1978

was permitted to drain into the collection sewer. Apparently with our change of staff, this practice continued even after the collection sewer began collecting leachate. I have instructed our staff to discontinue this practice, and we are investigating four options for disposal of the liquids from the lagoon:

1. Trucking liquids to the North Kent Sanitary Sewer System with our own vehicle.
2. Trucking liquid waste to the North Kent Sanitary Sewer System using a private contractor.
3. Constructing a sewer to connect with the North Kent Sanitary Sewer System.
4. Developing a recirculating leachate system.

This last alternative would require approval of the Department of Natural Resources, I believe, but we must still check that. Furthermore, I have asked the staff to investigate possible ways of separating runoff water from leachate, since the majority of the volume involved is still from runoff. In fact, the chemical analysis of the liquid in the leachate lagoon indicates very, very little, if any, leachate is entering the system at this time. The detailed report is available to you if you wish.

3. Sedimentation Basins

It is true that some of the sedimentation basins have become quite full. It is not true that they have become filled to a level where they are nonfunctional. Our engineer walked the area during the last heavy rain and states he observed no sedimentation leaving the site. In the meantime, we have requested a piece of equipment to come in and clean out the basins; this should be completed in about one week. I have also asked the staff to develop a regular program for inspecting and cleaning the sedimentation basins.

4. Lack of Daily Cover

Your letter implies that the site frequently is not covered properly. This is not true. There have been only three days (May 1, 15 & 26) since the site opened that we have been unable to put full proper cover on the site, and then only due to simultaneous breakdown of our three front-end loaders. There have been days when we have not put as much cover over the traveled (roadway) area of the landfill as we normally do, and this has resulted in some tire problems for the refuse trucks, but we did have the minimum amount of cover required by law. This problem has come about due to the fact that our three front-end loaders are aging, and in the past few weeks, a number of them have been down simultaneously. The Department of Public Works Board has approved

Mr. Roger Conner
Page Three
June 7, 1978

purchase of a new front-end loader and extensive repair on two others, and this should solve the problem. In addition, our new bulldozer and compactor are now on the site, and thus we will be able to maintain the road over the fill in proper condition.

5. Disposal of Story Chemical Clean Up Waste

As you know, I was not aware that the Story Chemical wastes were being disposed of in the landfill; I know only that some nonhazardous contaminated sand from outside Kent County was being brought there at the request of the Department of Natural Resources. I have discussed this with the Department of Public Works Board and with our staff, and am convinced that our staff acted in good faith in accepting this material on the basis of the Department of Natural Resources presentation. The Department of Natural Resources specifically stated that this was nonhazardous material and, if the information in their letter is correct, I agree with them. The only question is whether they represented the situation accurately or performed the appropriate chemical analysis to insure that their statements are correct.

Unfortunately, David Despres did not have the benefit of seeing Andy Hogarth's presentation on chemical spills in Michigan, and therefore was not aware of the messy situation at Story Chemical; in other words, no red flags came up in his mind when the Department of Natural Resources approached him. Thus, I think it was entirely appropriate for him to assume the Department of Natural Resources had performed the proper chemical analysis, and that the statements made orally and in their letter were accurate. I do not believe that in any way the staff intended to frustrate the intent of the Board.

Incidentally, I should mention that at our meeting this past week the Board of Public Works asked the staff to conduct a telephone poll of Board members before accepting any wastes of this sort in the future.

I agree with you that you should be concerned about where the other wastes at Story Chemical went. If we, in fact, received only the nonhazardous materials containing the standard industrial solvents listed in the Department of Natural Resources' letter, the other, worse materials must have gone to other landfills which perhaps are even less suitable for receiving that waste.

Mr. Roger Conner
Page Four
June 7, 1978

Thank you again for your letter. You can be assured that we will work with you in resolving any problems, and are most eager to operate a first-rate landfill in an environmentally acceptable manner.

Sincerely yours,

KENT COUNTY BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS

Vernon J. Ehlers, Chairman

VJE/slv